Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (currently amended) An apparatus for fixating a suture in a substantially perpendicular orientation relative to a pledget, the apparatus comprising:

a block having ~~at least one~~ a first and second slit extending therethrough, the first and second slit being configured to substantially align with first and second opening on a pledget, the ~~at least one~~ first slit configured and adapted to engage at least a portion of a first end portion of the suture and the second slit configured and adapted to engage at least a portion of a second end portion of the suture to maintain the substantially perpendicular suture/pledget orientation.

2.   (currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the ~~at least one~~ first and second slit ~~is~~ are configured and dimensioned to maintain a substantially parallel relationship between first and second end portions of the suture.

3.   (cancelled)

4.   (original) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the block includes a first face, a second face, and a top face therebetween.

5.   (cancelled)

6.   (previously presented) A suture pledget assembly comprising:

an elongated suture having a first end portion, a second end portion, and an intermediate portion therebetween;

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a pledget having a front wall in an abutting relation to a block such that the front wall substantially contacts at least a portion of the block, the pledget including the intermediate portion of the suture and the intermediate portion is spaced apart from the block; and

the block having at least one slit extending therethrough, the at least one slit configured and adapted to engage at least a portion of a first end portion of the suture and at least a portion of a second end portion of the suture to maintain the suture in a substantially perpendicular position relative to the pledget.

7.   (original) The assembly of claim 6, wherein the at least one slit is configured and dimensioned to maintain a substantially parallel relationship between first and second end portions of the suture.

8.   (original) The assembly of claim 6, wherein the at least one slit is two slits.

9.   (cancelled)

10.   (previously presented) The assembly of claim 6, wherein the block includes a first face, a second face, and a top face therebetween.

11.   (original) The assembly of claim 10, wherein at least a portion of the first and second end portions of the suture extend beyond a face of the block.

12.   (original) A suture pledget package comprising:

a suture pledget assembly including an elongated suture, a block including at least one slit extending therethrough wherein the at least one slit is configured and adapted to engage at least a portion of the suture, and a pledget including an intermediate portion of the suture; and

a package including a backing panel defining a plurality of elongated tracks, each track configured and dimensioned for receiving at least one suture pledget assembly, and a front panel attached to the backing panel.

13.   (original) The package of claim 12, wherein the elongated suture includes a first end portion, a second end portion, and an intermediate portion therebetween.

14.   (original) The package of claim 13, wherein the at least one slit is configured and dimensioned to maintain a substantially parallel relationship between first and second end portions of the suture.

15.   (original) The package of claim 12, wherein the at least one slit is two slits.

16.   (original) The package of claim 13, wherein the first and second end portions are substantially perpendicular to the front wall of the pledget.

17.   (original) The package of claim 12, wherein the block includes a first face, a second face, and a top face therebetween.

18.   (previously presented) The package of claim 19, wherein at least a portion of the first and second end portions of the suture extend beyond a face of the block.

19.   (previously presented) The package of claim 13, wherein the block includes a first face, a second face, and a top face therebetween.